

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

### Listing of Claims

Claims 1 - 22 (canceled)

Claim 23 (original): A method of forming a magnetoresistive device, comprising:

providing a substrate; and

forming a synthetic AFM layer having a first iron (Fe) layer and a second iron (Fe) layer separated by an iron-silicide (FeSi) layer.

Claim 24 (currently amended): The method ~~as recited in~~ of claim 23[[,]] wherein forming said synthetic AFM layer includes the use of molecule beam epitaxy (MBE) techniques.

Claim 25 (currently amended): The method ~~as recited in~~ of claim 23[[,]] wherein forming said synthetic AFM layer includes:

depositing a first iron (Fe) initial layer over said substrate;

depositing a silicon (Si) layer over said first Fe layer;

depositing a second Fe initial layer over said Si; and

heating said first Fe initial layer, said Si layer, and said second Fe initial layer until material from at least one of said first Fe initial layer and said second Fe initial layer propagates into said Si layer to transform said Si layer into said FeSi layer.

Claim 26 (currently amended): The method ~~as recited in~~ of claim 23[[,]] wherein during said heating, material from the other of said first Fe layer and said second Fe layer also propagates into said Si layer.

Claim 27 (currently amended): The method ~~as recited in~~ of claim 25[[,]] wherein said heating is conducted to heat said first Fe layer, said Si layer, and said second Fe layer to a temperature in the range of about 150 degrees C to about 250 degrees C.

Claim 28 (currently amended): The method ~~as recited in~~ of claim 27[[,]] wherein said heating is conducted to heat said first Fe layer, said Si layer, and said second Fe layer to a temperature of about 200 degrees C.

Claim 29 (currently amended): The method ~~as recited in~~ of claim 23[[,]] wherein forming said synthetic AFM layer includes:

- forming said first Fe layer above said substrate;
- forming said FeSi layer by sputtering Si and Fe substantially simultaneously over said first Fe layer and heating said Fe and said Si to form iron-silicide; and
- forming said second Fe layer above said FeSi layer.

Claim 30 (currently amended): The method ~~as recited in~~ of claim 29[[,]] wherein said heating heats said Fe and said Si to a temperature of about 200 degrees C.

Claim 31 (currently amended): The method ~~as recited in~~ of claim 23[[,]] further comprising:

- setting a magnetization of said first Fe layer in a first direction; and
- setting a magnetization of said second Fe layer in a second direction that is substantially antiparallel to said first direction.

Claim 32 (currently amended): The method ~~as recited in~~ of claim 23[[,]] wherein said FeSi layer includes between about 25% to about 75% Fe and Si forms up to the remainder of the FeSi layer.

Claim 33 (currently amended): The method ~~as recited in~~ of claim 32[[,]] wherein said layer including Fe and Si includes about 50% Fe and about 50% Si.

Claim 34 (currently amended): The method ~~as recited in~~ of claim 23[[,]] further comprising:

- forming a spacer layer over said synthetic AFM layer;
- forming a free layer over said spacer layer; and
- forming a pinning layer between said pinned layer and said substrate.

Claim 35 (currently amended): The method ~~as recited in~~ of claim 34[[,]] wherein said spacer layer is formed of a non-magnetic metal, said free layer is formed of a ferromagnetic material, and said pinning layer is formed of an antiferromagnetic (AFM) material.

Claim 36 (currently amended): The method ~~as recited in~~ of claim 35[[,]] wherein said spacer layer is formed of copper (Cu), said free layer is formed of one of CoFe and NiFe, and said AFM layer is formed of one of NiO, NiCoO, NiFeO, and Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>.

Claim 37 (currently amended): The method ~~as recited in~~ of claim 34[[,]] further comprising:  
forming a first shield between said substrate and said AFM layer; and  
forming a second shield over said free layer.

Claim 38 (currently amended): The method ~~as recited in~~ of claim 37[[,]] further comprising:  
forming a metal spacer layer between said second shield and said free layer, including a non-magnetic metal material.

Claim 39 (new): The method of claim 34 wherein forming the spacer layer over the synthetic AFM layer comprises forming a layer of Cu.

Claim 40 (new): The method of claim 39 wherein forming a layer of Cu comprises sputtering Cu.

Claim 41 (new): The method of claim 34 wherein forming the free layer comprises forming a layer of a ferromagnetic material selected from one of CoFe and NiFe.

Claim 42 (new): The method of claim 41 wherein forming the free layer comprises forming a layer of CoFe.

Claim 43 (new): The method of claim 41 wherein forming the free layer comprises forming a layer of NiFe.

Claim 44 (new): The method of claim 34 wherein forming the pinning layer comprises, prior to forming the synthetic AFM layer, forming a layer of an antiferromagnetic material over the substrate.

Claim 45 (new): The method of claim 44 wherein forming the layer of an antiferromagnetic material over the substrate comprises forming a layer of an antiferromagnetic material selected from the group consisting of NiO, NiCoO, NiFeO, and Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>.

Claim 46 (new): The method of claim 44 wherein forming the layer of an antiferromagnetic material over the substrate comprises forming a layer of NiO.

Claim 46 (new): The method of claim 44 wherein forming the layer of an antiferromagnetic material over the substrate comprises forming a layer of NiCoO.

Claim 46 (new): The method of claim 44 wherein forming the layer of an antiferromagnetic material over the substrate comprises forming a layer of NiFeO.

Claim 46 (new): The method of claim 44 wherein forming the layer of an antiferromagnetic material over the substrate comprises forming a layer of Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>.